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Lehtsalu, Liise

Postprint / Postprint

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Lehtsalu, L. (2016). Rethinking Monastic Suppressions in Revolutionary and Napoleonic Italy: how women religious negotiated for their communities. *Women's history review*, 25(6), 945-964. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2015.1085263>

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This is an Accepted Manuscript (Postprint) of an article published by Taylor & Francis in the Women's History Review on March 1, 2016 (online) and in December 2016 (in print). The Version of Record can be found here: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2015.1085263>

Rethinking Monastic Suppressions in Revolutionary and Napoleonic Italy: how women religious negotiated for their communities

Liise Lehtsalu

Female religious communities and individual women religious confronted the monastic suppressions in late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century Italy by actively negotiating with authorities both during and after the suppression decrees. The lack of the voices of the suppressed women religious in current scholarship has led scholars to argue for top-down, predetermined reorganization and destruction of religious life in Revolutionary and Napoleonic Italy. A comparison of the three main suppression decrees reveals, instead, an evolving approach to religious institutions during this period. The petitions by women religious underscore how compromise and accommodation characterized the interactions between female communities and local and central authorities. The suppression of monasteries was not done to monastic women unilaterally; rather, these women actively negotiated the suppressions to optimize the outcome for their communities and for themselves.

Biographical Details

Liise Lehtsalu is PhD Candidate in History at Brown University. This article is based on research undertaken for her doctoral dissertation, "Negotiated Lives: Women's Third Order Religious Communities in Eighteenth-Century Italy". Correspondence to: Liise Lehtsalu, History Department, Brown University, Providence, RI 02912, USA. Email: Liise_Lehtsalu@brown.edu

I

Suor Elena Terzi from the third order Franciscan community of S. Giuseppe in Bergamo died on 21 November 1799.¹ Her obituary, recorded in S. Giuseppe's book of professions, recalled Terzi as an admirable tertiary who, 'for many years exercised the duties of the treasurer with great care, particularly during these recent, most unhappy times'.² By the time of Terzi's death in 1799 Bergamo had experienced three years of occupation and pillage, first by the French and then the Austro-Russian troops; and more was to come.³ The arrival of the young general Napoleon and his troops in Italy in spring 1796 had altered the established geopolitical contours on the peninsula and started a period that, according to Stuart Woolf, brought more changes to Italian frontiers than any other period since the Renaissance.⁴ The first culmination of these changes was the establishment of the Cisalpine Republic in 1797. With its capital in Milan, this French 'sister republic' united most of North-Central Italy. The Cisalpine Republic collapsed in spring 1799, giving way to a short, Austrian-led interim period. The second Cisalpine Republic, controlled – like the first – by Napoleon himself, was proclaimed in February 1800. In 1802, the second Cisalpine Republic became the Italian Republic, which transformed into the Kingdom of Italy after Napoleon's coronation as the emperor in 1805. Napoleon held the Italian crown until the collapse of the kingdom in 1814. This quickly shifting historical scene provided the context for monastic suppressions in Italy: these were the 'unhappy times' that the obituary of *suor* Terzi lamented.

The first Cisalpine Republic decreed the suppression of religious congregations on its territory in 1798; further suppression decrees in northern Italy included that of the Italian Republic in 1805 and of the Kingdom of Italy in 1810. Historians have proposed various causes for these suppressions. Stuart Woolf has called attention to anti-clericalism among the Cisalpine legislature, but sees economic motivations for the state confiscation of ecclesiastical property during the Cisalpine period and increasing jurisdictional motivations

after 1802, when the Napoleonic states aspired towards centralization and control over both the secular and the spiritual.⁵ Michael Broers argues that the French pursued programmatic anti-clericalism and deliberate destruction of religion in Italy, of which monastic suppressions were part.⁶ Italian-language historians tend to pursue an argument similar to that of Woolf. They stress the jurisdictional and economic grounds for the Cisalpine and Napoleonic ecclesiastic reforms and, notably, underscore continuities with earlier, eighteenth-century ecclesiastic reforms decreed by Joseph II in Lombardy and Leopold II in Tuscany.⁷ These histories place the Cisalpine and the Napoleonic suppressions in the European-wide context of late-eighteenth century monastic reforms and focus on jurisdictional struggles between states and the Church.⁸ Missing from this scholarship are the voices of the suppressed religious. Consequently, current scholarship suggests that suppressions were forced upon convents and religious congregations in Italy. Such implicit victimization of the suppressed women religious replicates – unintentionally, perhaps – the deliberate depiction of nuns as victims that was current in eighteenth-century French polemical texts,⁹ which also circulated in Italy.¹⁰ This article argues that women religious actively participated in the suppressions process. By focusing on suppression experiences of the women religious, the article destabilizes top-down approaches to monastic dissolutions and reveals the women religious' astute awareness of the political context around them and their willingness to negotiate with both local and central authorities.

Recent scholarship on monastic suppressions in Revolutionary France and Josephine Austria stresses that the women religious obstructed dissolutions at times, making it a slow process. For France, Gemma Betros argues that petitions from female communities and individual religious hampered the implementation of an outright suppression decree in the early years of the Revolution.¹¹ Carmen Mangion has highlighted compromise and accommodation in the relations between French authorities and the exiled English nuns living

in Revolutionary Paris.¹² The women religious engaged in direct communication with Revolutionary authorities; they used the language and the rhetoric of the Revolution to argue for the survival of their convents and challenged the Revolution by resisting to its laws, most prominently the Civil Constitution of the Clergy.¹³ These studies on France consider, however, only the period leading up to the full-scale suppression and confiscation of monastic property. For Austria, Ute Ströbele also highlights negotiations between women religious and suppressing officials that preceded the Josephine suppressions in the late-eighteenth century; like in France, the women religious in Austria also employed the discourse of the suppressors in their appeals for preservation. Notably, Ströbele emphasizes that such negotiations did not end at the moment of suppression but the women religious sought to shape their post-suppression experiences as well.¹⁴ I argue that the women religious in Italy negotiated their suppression experiences both *pre* and *post facto*; the act of suppression was not the end-point to the women religious' negotiations with authorities but rather a starting point for further compromises regarding post-dissolution livelihoods.

This article focuses on third order communities in Bergamo and Bologna. Both cities were part of the successive Cisalpine Republic, Italian Republic, and Kingdom of Italy. Unlike the enclosed, second order convents that followed a specific monastic rule and were subjected to episcopal authority after the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century, third order communities remained very local and de-centralized institutions. Some were subject to local episcopal authorities, others to their particular religious order. They often followed individual rules written by a confessor or a founder and emerged in response to particular social needs: family networking, education, care for the elderly and the disabled, to name a few. Consequently, the institutional character of third order communities was malleable and changed over time. Third order communities are little studied in current scholarship on early modern European monasticism, which largely focuses on the implementation and

consequences of monastic enclosure after the Council of Trent.¹⁵ Yet, the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries saw an expansion of semi-monastic and monastic communities that combined the active and the contemplative ideals of Catholic monasticism.¹⁶ In eighteenth-century North-Central Italy, as enclosed convents entered a decline, third order communities expanded alongside new teaching congregations.¹⁷ The suppression of third order communities occurred more slowly than the dissolution of enclosed convents, with both the 1798 and the 1805 suppressions in the Cisalpine Republic and the Kingdom of Italy deliberately preserving some third order communities. Studying monastic suppressions through the lens of third order communities highlights the changing focus of the three Italian suppression decrees between 1798 and 1810 and shows how the tertiaries adapted to the continuously changing circumstances.¹⁸

The article begins with a brief analysis of the three suppression decrees of 1798, 1805, and 1810, drawing attention to shifts in their scope and focus. I will then turn to the reactions of women religious to suppressions, considering both their attempts to compromise with officials to ensure the survival of their communities as well as the negotiations over post-suppression realities. Recovering the voices of women religious in Napoleonic Italy is hindered by the current state of preservation of the archives on late-eighteenth century Italy. The archives of the suppressed monastic institutions include very little on these communities' dissolution. The documents on suppressions are part of the collections of state papers of the revolutionary republics and the Napoleonic states in Italy. These collections are only rudimentarily catalogued in places like Bologna; the better-catalogued collections in Bergamo and Milan include prescriptive policies and guidelines for suppressions but very little on how the suppressions were experienced by the dissolved communities. This article introduces the early fruits of research about the reactions of women religious to monastic

suppressions in Italy and highlights the active role these women assumed when negotiating the religious policies of Napoleonic Italy.

II

Following sporadic dissolutions in 1796-1797,¹⁹ the Cisalpine Republic proclaimed a general suppression and amalgamation of religious corporations in May 1798, to meet ‘the urgent needs of the Republic’.²⁰ Months-long debate in the Cisalpine Great Council had preceded the decree, with focus on improving the failing economy of the Republic. The members of the Council called for the nationalization of ecclesiastical estates. Secularized religious people were to receive a pension that was paid from the nationalized estate of their suppressed religious institution.²¹ The future of the religious population was part of a larger debate on equality that animated the Cisalpine legislative body.²² According to the Council members, nationalization and pensions would make the religious free and equal citizens of the Cisalpine Republic, who contributed to the Nation with their property and received appropriate remuneration from the state in return.²³ Pensions were necessary to protect the families of the secularized religious from claims to inheritance, the rights to which most religious people had renounced when they professed their religious vows. However, the pension system itself was a potential burden on the Cisalpine state budget.²⁴ Consequently, the Great Council decided to preserve provisionally those monastic institutions that had estates which were too small to provide pensions.²⁵ The Cisalpine suppression in 1798 was first and foremost an economic measure, even though delegates to the Great Council also expressed ideological aversion to monastic institutions. Indeed, legal provisions for secularized women religious – including pensions and dedicated shelters in every Department – required the women to reject enclosure, religious habit, and communal life, which had long been the outward characteristics of female monasticism.²⁶ Nevertheless, the suppression of monastic communities was expected to fill the coffers of the Cisalpine Republic. The

preservation of poorer institutions avoided additional burdens on state budget. Local suppression decrees that followed the central decree stressed the financial ‘utility’ of dissolutions and referred to the income the state would draw from a particular institution.²⁷ Most third order communities were preserved in 1798 – too poor to meet the financial conditions set for suppression.²⁸

Napoleon proclaimed the next wave of general suppressions on 8 June 1805. Again, the decree foresaw the nationalization of monastic estates and their subsequent sale to ease public debt.²⁹ This time, however, the decree specifically preserved all institutions that ‘singularly applied themselves to education’.³⁰ Moreover, convents that admitted some educational boarders without being singularly focused on educational activities were also provisionally preserved, particularly if they had space to accept non-secularized nuns of the same order.³¹ All Capuchin and third-order mendicant communities were preserved, contingent on ‘demonstrated convenience [for the state]’.³² Finally, the 1805 decree allowed all teaching institutions, provisionally preserved convents, and mendicant communities to accept novices, with the prior approval of local ecclesiastical and central authorities.³³ The 1805 suppression thus preserved those female institutions that participated in the education of the youth and strove to maintain a certain number of them throughout the Kingdom.

This marked a shift from the Cisalpine suppressions and coincided with religious policies in France, where Napoleon permitted the work of some teaching and nursing congregation with decrees issued from 1800 to 1815.³⁴ In Italy, the 1805 suppressions strove to integrate the preserved institutions into a state system of religious management. The decree introduced central oversight of the preserved institutions, completed by local ecclesiastical superiors who reported to the central administration in Milan, and assigned state financing to these institutions.³⁵ The State Council meeting that ironed out the details of the 1805 decree tellingly focused on the ‘service that is expected from these religious and [...] the

maintenance of them'.³⁶ Already in 1803, the Italian Concordat had established Catholicism as state religion; the ratification of the Concordat affirmed the supremacy of state laws over ecclesiastical law.³⁷ Even before the signing of the Concordat, a ministry of religion had been established in Milan in 1802. At the helm of this ministry was Giovanni Bovara, who had already directed the Josephine ecclesiastical reforms in Lombardy in the late-eighteenth century. Almost half of Bovara's forty-four officials had also entered public service before the arrival of the French. Bovara pursued a politico-juridical reorganization and rationalization of religious affairs in the early nineteenth century that largely continued from the Josephine reforms of the late eighteenth century.³⁸ In a letter to Napoleon on 9 July 1805, Bovara emphasized the need to preserve the remaining religious congregations, particularly in those departments where earlier suppressions had already greatly diminished the number of surviving institutions; he stressed that the 1805 suppressions were undertaken in 'the interests and the comfort of many people'.³⁹ Religious congregations, particularly those preserved from dissolution, served specific functions in the Kingdom of Italy.

The last large-scale suppression in the Kingdom of Italy was decreed on 25 April 1810:

With the exception of bishoprics, archbishoprics, seminaries, cathedral chapters, other collegial chapters, the *Sisters of Charity*, and other houses for female education which we will decide to preserve with special decrees, all other ecclesiastical establishments, corporations, congregations, communities, and associations of whatever nature and denomination are suppressed.⁴⁰

Again, the decree singled out those religious institutions that undertook educational activities for preservation, which was made contingent upon further local and central decisions.

Similarly to 1805, the preserved institutions were subordinated to the state. Yet, an increasingly uneasy view of the education provided in monastic institutions was prevailing among certain high-ranking state officials. In 1811, the director general of the police, in a letter to the minister of religion, complained that some communities used the recent decrees

and exemptions to continue ‘ancient customs and not distance themselves from monastic practices’. However, he went on, the preservation of (some) monastic communities was necessary because their absence would eliminate public education and thus danger the society.⁴¹ Similar concerns were expressed by the director general of public instruction, who, in a letter to the vice roy Eugène de Beauharnais in 1811, stated that ‘while it is clear that the monastic societies must not exist any more, unfortunately it is certain that once such societies are dissolved, new colleges for the education of girls will not be established without extraordinary encouragements’.⁴² Monastic congregations were no longer shielded from criticism by running schools, even when their social utility was recognized. By late 1811, all monastic congregations were suppressed in the Kingdom of Italy.

This very brief overview of the three suppression decrees from 1798, 1805, and 1810 highlights the shifting emphasis of the dissolutions. Rather than a single-minded ‘war on religion’, the suppression decrees highlight a religious policy that included a multiplicity of voices and created spaces for the preservation of some monastic communities. From financial in 1798 to functional in 1805 and finally to an increasing suspicion of the remaining monastic congregations in 1810, the Napoleonic suppressions in Italy were not monolithic. Monastic congregations and the individual women religious experienced a continuously changing legal and political context from 1798 to 1810.

III

Suor Elena Terzi, whose obituary opened this article, sent a petition to the Executive Directory in June 1798; as the treasurer of the Franciscan third order community of S. Giuseppe in Bergamo she asked permission to increase the interest rate on all credit that S. Giuseppe had extended. Terzi stressed that her community was experiencing ‘calamitous times’ and needed help to ensure the sustenance of the tertiaries. She concluded her petition with the assurance: ‘we never stop to extend our prayers to Our Lord for Your preservation

and for the preservation of our happy, immortal Republic'.⁴³ Terzi's appeal highlights the complex and contradictory nature of the suppression experience for both third order communities as well as all other preserved religious congregations. On one hand, the post-1798 period was unrecognizable compared to the pre-suppression times. These were 'calamitous times'. On the other hand, Terzi offered intercessory prayer – like women religious had for centuries before her.⁴⁴

Although the revolutionary époque is often characterized as a period of unremitting change, much of the daily established financial and social interactions of the preserved religious congregations remained unchanged. Monastic communities continued to extend credit also in the early nineteenth century, as they had done throughout the early modern period.⁴⁵ While there were only a few new credit contracts, the pre-1798 contracts were respected both in Bologna and in Bergamo.⁴⁶ The tertiaries of S. Giuseppe in Bergamo continued to elect their co-religious into in-house offices like the mother superior, the treasurer or the gatekeeper until 1809, following voting practices that dated to the seventeenth century.⁴⁷ The account books for the Servite tertiaries of Ognisanti in Bologna show that the community's main expense items – food, heat, building maintenance, fees to priests, and public taxes – remained unchanged between 1793 and 1807. Between 1809-1810, Ognisanti undertook an extensive restoration of its convent building and two adjacent houses.⁴⁸ Even though S. Giuseppe in Bergamo struggled to find priests to celebrate masses in their church after 1798,⁴⁹ the community nonetheless planned for the future. In 1807, the tertiaries recorded that they had secured funds to celebrate memorial masses for the 'following thirty years'.⁵⁰ Between 1805-1810, S. Giuseppe also contracted new rental agreements with its tenants for periods of up to fifteen years.⁵¹

In addition to continuing established financial and social practices, religious communities also continued to accept new women into their midst in the early nineteenth

century, both novices and boarders. The Franciscan tertiaries of S. Elisabetta in Bologna negotiated with local ecclesiastical authorities over the acceptance of the marquise Ghislieri, her daughter, and her maid-servant as boarders in 1799.⁵² The Carmelite tertiaries of S. Maria delle Grazie in Bologna accepted novices in 1805.⁵³ The account books of Ognisanti in Bologna evidence a steady flow of boarders entering and exiting the community between 1793 and 1807.⁵⁴ All communities preserved by the suppression decrees also amalgamated women religious from the already dissolved convents. S. Giuseppe in Bergamo accommodated both the Franciscan tertiaries of the neighbouring S. Antonio, as well as ex-religious from the nearby localities of Clusone, Gandino, and Ambivere.⁵⁵ In Bologna, Ognisanti accommodated numerous nuns from various suppressed enclosed convents after 1798,⁵⁶ while both S. Elisabetta and S. Maria delle Grazie were expected to amalgamate tertiaries of the same order from the near-by suppressed communities in Loiano and Medicina according to suppression ordinances.⁵⁷ Thus, even though suppressions were a reality both within and without the third order communities, the tertiaries continued their daily lives and planned for their future. Contributing to this continuity was perhaps the slow dissolution process of female religious congregations, which lasted over a decade and included exceptions in every suppression decree.⁵⁸

Nevertheless, the revolutionary and Napoleonic period did bring changes, including frequent administrative alterations, new laws, and delimiting restrictions on the decision making of individual religious communities. The first decade of the nineteenth century was characterized by adverse weather and bad harvests, made worse by the disruptions caused by foreign troops.⁵⁹ In 1800, S. Elisabetta in Bologna had to take out a loan to buy grain for the tertiaries. This loan was still outstanding in 1806, a year after the dissolution of S. Elisabetta; by then, the loan affected the pension fund of the tertiaries, directly dependant on the financial assets of their suppressed convent.⁶⁰ In a move that may seem surprising, the

tertiaries of S. Elisabetta had petitioned for the community's suppression already in the early 1800s.⁶¹ The draft episcopal response to S. Elisabetta's petition reveals that the tertiary wished the suppression due to their community's bad finances. The women were perhaps aware of the laws that related pensions to suppressed convents' nationalized estates and wished to secularize before S. Elisabetta's finances deteriorated any further. However, the vicar general of Bologna rejected the petition since such suppression benefitted 'neither the public good nor the private interests of the *suore*'. The suppression threatened the public good because it would have deprived Bologna of 'the considerable benefit of having a provisional place where to place the unmarried girls facing some danger', as well as of a place for those married women who needed shelter from the 'inconveniences that can arise between a husband and a wife and that can be resolved using the means of such a retreat'. The private interests of the tertiary were threatened because 'if the tertiary were incapable of supporting themselves when living together in a community, they would face even greater financial hardship when living apart'.⁶² The vicar general thus considered S. Elisabetta socially useful: it sheltered both secular women in danger but also the tertiary themselves. The administrators in Bergamo expressed similar views regarding third order communities in their district. In 1807, in response to a missive from the prefect of the Department of Serio who demanded information about the remaining Capuchin and tertiary communities in the area, the chief magistrate of Bergamo replied:

As far as the proposed amalgamation of convents, I do not know, which houses to add, since the convents appear neither redundant nor too numerous to me, and I find useful and necessary those convents that provide education, thus I can only beg you for their continued preservation.⁶³

Another local administrator from the Bergamo area responded to the same 1807 missive by writing:

Even if, on the one hand, these communities [continued] existence is desirable due to the education [they provide to] girls, on the other hand it is better that they don't exist because, if I tell my honest opinion, I am not too convinced

about an education that comes from the heated and fanatic heads that, for the most part, are against the governmental decrees and true morality.⁶⁴

Even though this second administrator expressed doubts that highlight the existence of anti-clerical attitudes, the local officials in Bergamo and Bologna nonetheless recognized the social utility of religious houses.⁶⁵ As I turn to specific petitions by tertiaries, it is thus important to bear in mind that the petitioning occurred not only in the framework of frequent legal and administrative change but also in a context where opinions about the social utility of monastic institutions and their suppression varied between the officials in Milan and the localities.⁶⁶

However, the officials in Milan also expressed deep-rooted cultural attitudes about women religious alongside reforming impulses. When the Franciscan tertiaries of S. Antonio in Bergamo complained about their experiences in neighbouring S. Giuseppe, to which they had been amalgamated in 1798, the general director of the national estate pointed out that the tertiaries displayed ‘a certain air of discontent for the treatment they receive in S. Giuseppe or for other reasons that easily arise in a community, particularly a community of women’. To resolve the situation, the general director suggested that the prefecture in Bergamo involve the local ecclesiastical authorities to ‘re-establish harmony and that charitable and reciprocal tolerance and unity that is the fundamental maxim demanded of all religious, and particularly of those who have entered the state of perfection’.⁶⁷ The general director’s suggestions recall assessments meted out during early modern pastoral visits when episcopal authorities advised convent communities to live in peace and mutual understanding. In Bergamo, the local bishop Antonio Redetti had dispatched annual pastoral letters with such message to female monastic communities, including both S. Antonio and S. Giuseppe, between 1732-1771.⁶⁸ On one hand, therefore, monastic institutions faced suppression. On the other, however, officials expected the women religious to behave in ways compatible with long-established cultural norms. Such interplay between continuities and discontinuities is also evident in petitions

penned by women religious, as already evidenced by *suor* Elena Terzi's petition above. Also the tertiaries of S. Antonio ended their appeal with a promise of intercessory prayer: 'these poor Mothers do not stop, and never will stop, in their orations to God to pray for the prosperity of your Highness'.⁶⁹ If we consider that many officials of the ministry of religion had entered public service in the 1780s and even earlier, as discussed above, such interplay is perhaps not surprising. Moreover, many third order communities were used to petitioning already in the pre-revolutionary times, as I discuss next. Nevertheless, the coexistence of continuity and change created a complex environment for the women religious to negotiate.

Many third order communities had long experience of petitioning. The two Franciscan tertiary houses of S. Antonio and S. Giuseppe in Bergamo had both petitioned the Venetian chief magistrate in Bergamo and the Council of Ten in Venice on several occasions between the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. These petitions were framed by restrictions placed on ecclesiastical property by the Venetian Republic on one hand,⁷⁰ and the local officials' attempts to use S. Antonio and S. Giuseppe as shelters for women facing marriage troubles on the other.⁷¹ In nineteenth century, the tertiaries of S. Giuseppe referred to these earlier petitions when appealing to the officials of the Kingdom of Italy. In June 1805, the tertiaries asked the minister of religion to recognize S. Giuseppe as a lay institution. The petition was signed by the mother superior, the vicaress, and the treasurer and presented a short history of S. Giuseppe that focused on the community's foundation in the seventeenth-century by women concerned for the 'exemplary behaviour and the education of girls'. The tertiaries described S. Giuseppe as a 'secular', 'lay' institution dedicated to education throughout the petition.⁷² Yet this 1805 petition rewrote the institutional history of S. Giuseppe. The community had been founded by three sisters in circa 1638. The sisters lived together with a well-known Franciscan tertiary in Bergamo and, even though S. Giuseppe operated an 'academy' for girls since its foundation, the women religious professed

according to the Franciscan third order rule and were recognized as tertiaries by local episcopal authorities.⁷³ In response to petitions, Venetian authorities had recognized S. Giuseppe as a 'secular community' that educated girls in 1668, 1718, 1730, 1737, and 1759. In 1805, the tertiaries appended all these earlier petitions and the corresponding responses to their petition. They appealed to precedence and asked to be exempt from suppression on the ground of being a lay institution:

[...] given the lay character of this asylum, and given its institutional education of girls, the secular women who find themselves retired in this institution should not, on any ground, fear to be subjected to the dispositions of Article V of the law regarding religious establishments [...]⁷⁴

The petition convinced the minister of religion, who advised the prefect of the Department of Serio that, 'the women religious of S. Giuseppe... have produced unquestionable documents which attest to [its] true character as an educational institution'.⁷⁵ The minister, like the Venetian authorities before him, recognized the utility of S. Giuseppe. The tertiaries of S. Giuseppe employed past experiences, as well as the language of utility that characterized their current time, to communicate with Napoleonic authorities.

The tertiaries were aware of the rhetoric of utility that underlay monastic suppressions and sought to employ it for their own benefit. It seems, moreover, that the women religious were also conscious of the fears the authorities had for fallout with the populace arising from monastic suppressions. The pensions system with its often delayed or suspended payments caused concern to authorities and both the central and the local administration perceived the failing system as a threat to public order.⁷⁶ 'The aim of pension payments is to secure the integrity of the government, but they also serve to protect the government from the disgrace of public calamities', wrote a local official in Bologna to the Administrative Commission of the National Estate in October 1800.⁷⁷ In August 1801, a group of secularized women religious petitioned the State Council, on behalf of all women religious in the commune of Bologna, to protest a recent full-scale suspension of pension payments in the Department of

Reno. The women called the measure cruel, considered it a local act against the intentions of the central administration in Milan, and issued the following threat, 'They [the women religious] ask for compassion and justice from this higher government, the orders of which are disrespected [in Bologna]... ..in ways that *may pose a threat to public peace*'.⁷⁸ Indeed, both central and local authorities had been concerned about the effects of suppressions on public opinion since the beginning of monastic dissolutions. In 1798, the Central Agency of National Estate encouraged local authorities to pursue dissolutions in a way that would not 'alienate the confidence of the citizens in those, who due to necessity, dictate the laws'.⁷⁹ The threats to the public order included by the women religious in their appeals thus resonated with the authorities own concerns. Administrative changes in the Republic of Italy and the Kingdom of Italy led to the central authorities in Milan assume responsibility for pension payments. The payments remained irregular, however, and in Bologna neither the tertiaries of S. Elisabetta nor those of S. Maria della Carità received any payments during the half-year period following the dissolutions of their communities in 1805.⁸⁰ In fact, the local director of the National Estate in Bologna wrote to the General Directorate in Milan in 1805, calling the situation of women religious deplorable and stating that some secularized nuns were reduced to begging on the streets, causing 'tensions among the populace'.⁸¹

The longer a community survived in the early-nineteenth century, the more experienced members were in communicating with authorities, first Cisalpine and then Napoleonic. The communities' leaders – mother superiors, vicaresses, and treasurers – frequently had to respond to questionnaires about financial management or the population of their institution.⁸² The information they provided affected the future of their communities, of which the women were no doubt aware. The mother superior of S. Giuseppe in Bergamo, for example, appealed to the local prefect for an extension to complete one such report in October 1804, arguing that the report was very complex.⁸³ The tertiaries were cautious. Since

the information requested in 1804 did not differ from what the tertiaries had reported earlier, the delay appears as a deliberate attempt to hinder the work of both local and central authorities. The tertiaries were astute readers of local and central politics.

The latter is demonstrated also by the Carmelite tertiaries of S. Maria delle Grazie in Bologna, who sought to expand their community in 1804-1805. First, the tertiaries wished to increase state funding to their community in early 1804 by highlighting its social utility:

The wise founder of this community saw that the limited funds of the community and contemplative life alone could not provide for the sustenance of this devote family. Thus, he proposed that the community, adapting to active life, could receive girls in education in order to make their institution also benefit the society, and to use the monthly fees received to educate these girls for the community's sustenance. [...] Now, in fact, these good religious women apply themselves to the education of girls and since the suppression of many monasteries has taken away many means to protect and instruct daughters whose parents, either because of impotence or because of their love for freedom wish to liberate themselves from the burden of education, the competition to gain a place in the school [of S. Maria delle Grazie] is greater than ever. Due to the patience and the industriousness of the tertiaries, [the girls are] very well instructed in domestic economy and in every other womanly work, and, if the girls have the talent and the inclination, even in singing and the playing of instruments.⁸⁴

The petition emphasized S. Maria delle Grazie's role as a school for girls. Furthermore, the tertiaries pointed out that the importance of their school – and consequently the community's social utility – had increased since suppressions began. Commenting on this petition in a letter to the archbishop of Bologna, the minister of religion stressed 'how much I admire from the bottom of my heart those monasteries that apply themselves, for the good of the society, to the instruction of the unmarried women'. Nonetheless, S. Maria delle Grazie did not receive the desired additional funding.⁸⁵ A year later, in spring 1805, the tertiaries of S. Maria delle Grazie came into contact with authorities again. This time, they successfully petitioned the local authorities in Bologna, on two separate occasions, to accept a total of three novices in their community. One of the petitions stressed that 'since the convent receives its income from the education of young girls, and since only a few nuns are apt for

the job of teaching, it benefits the convent to include these two young women'.⁸⁶ The Bolognese authorities gave the permission because it was to 'benefit the education of young girls'.⁸⁷

The examples above demonstrate that the women religious were astutely aware of the social position of their communities in the early-nineteenth century, capable of using the rhetoric of the authorities as well as of appealing to the fears and uncertainties of those authorities. The women religious were also knowledgeable about the laws and procedures that guided the suppressions. This emerges clearly from a petitioning campaign that the tertiaries of S. Antonio in Bergamo launched in 1799. S. Antonio had been amalgamated with the near-by Franciscan tertiaries of S. Giuseppe in 1798, which caused discontent on all sides. The officials in Bergamo received several petitions from the tertiaries of S. Antonio in late 1799, in which the women declared that they felt 'badly received and scarcely fed [in S. Giuseppe], leading unhappy days'. The tertiaries asked for 'the permission to be able to exit from this place [S. Giuseppe] and to be made equal to those tertiaries who have already left for [the purpose of] attaining the annual pension'.⁸⁸ One of the tertiaries wishing to leave, *suor* Giacinta Viscardi, specified that she wished:

...to exit in order to pass to the house of my brother, with the intention to profess in one of those shelters to which the Supreme Kindness has granted the right to accept new religious women; at the same time, I petition that a pension would be granted to me as it has been to others [...].⁸⁹

Collectively, these petitions highlight the tertiaries' familiarity with the laws and procedures that governed religious institutions and the secularized religious. The women referenced their right to have a pension as well as the possibility to enter another religious community that still had state approval. The commissioner of executive power in Bergamo had heard from the tertiaries of S. Antonio already in February 1799; these earlier petitions cited specific laws and paragraphs that, according to the women religious, provided them with a pension.

Repeated patterns within these earlier petitions raise questions about their authorship.⁹⁰

However, in a unique section of one of the petitions, *suor* Caterina Pesenti asked:

As I find myself to be one of those considered in the law mentioned above, I turn to your authority so that you would satisfy my petition and I beg you to relay it on to the Executive Director with an accompanying letter so that he could order S. Giuseppe, which I will abandon, to fix me the pension accorded to me by the law.⁹¹

By wishing to leave a community where they did not feel welcome and asking help from local officials to facilitate such a move, the tertiaries of S. Antonio sought to negotiate their suppression and post-suppression experiences and displayed familiarity with the laws and procedures that regulated the dissolutions.

The compromises the religious women sought to achieve come into focus even more clearly when we consider the dissolution of one rural tertiary community and the life of its tertiaries after the suppression. Medicina, a small agricultural town east of Bologna, had housed a Carmelite tertiary community dedicated to S. Teresa of Avila since around the year 1680.⁹² The community enjoyed the support of the local notable families and, by the end of the eighteenth century, was the larger of the two female religious communities in town, housing fourteen professed tertiaries and five lay sisters.⁹³ S. Teresa was suppressed in 1798, with the tertiaries being transferred to the Carmelite tertiary house of S. Maria delle Grazie in Bologna; those tertiaries, who did not wish to transfer or for whom the destination community lacked space, had to secularize.⁹⁴ After suppression, the convent building in Medicina was first used as a casern by the French troops; then, the local municipality wished to convert the building into a public school, petitioning the authorities in Bologna, Imola, and Milan not to sell the property into private hands in 1803-1804.⁹⁵ The tertiaries of S. Teresa did not transfer to S. Maria delle Grazie in Bologna, as they were supposed to do. The *status animarum*⁹⁶ for the parish of S. Maria delle Muratelle in Bologna, which included S. Maria delle Grazie, record no tertiaries from Medicina entering S. Maria delle Grazie in the period

from 1798-1805.⁹⁷ Instead, petitions penned by the tertiaries to authorities in Bologna show that the women continued to live in Medicina or had returned to their families.

In April 1800, three tertiaries of S. Teresa wrote to authorities in Bologna, explaining that after they had been ‘expelled from the convent with the miserable pension’, they had lived in the nearby-town of Budrio, in the house of a former boarder at S. Teresa named Eleonora Boriani. Now, however, Boriani was about to move to a small apartment that did not have space for the tertiaries. The tertiaries were to be homeless, ‘without any hope to be able to afford another, convenient retreat due to the limited pensions, [...] which are not even enough to pay for daily needs’. The three tertiaries, who also wrote in the name of their co-religious, asked to return to their convent building in Medicina, which the women claimed was only partially occupied and not yet sold to private buyers, in order ‘to retire there and better suffer our bad fate and the poverty for which we are not to be blamed’. The women concluded their petition with an insistence that ‘we would make a great injustice to the religious banner, under which your Revered Excellences undertake to protect the unhappy enclosed nuns [if they did not send this petition]’.⁹⁸ The tertiaries were aware of the current status of their old convent building, even when living at a distance from Medicina. Two weeks later, another group of six tertiaries of S. Teresa addressed the same authorities in Bologna with a new petition, in which the women asked to continue receiving their pension payments, despite living in parental homes outside the province of Bologna. The women called the pension payments ‘their whole existence’.⁹⁹ The two petitions, together bearing the signatures of nine of the fourteen professed tertiaries in S. Teresa, show that the religious family survived largely intact also after the suppression, or at least the women appeared united when interacting with the authorities.¹⁰⁰ Unfortunately, I have not been able to identify any replies to these two petitions. Yet, the petitions were composed during the short interim between the fall of the Cisalpine Republic and its re-constitution, which saw Russo-Austrian

troops occupying the Cisalpine area from 1799 to 1801. In autumn 1799, the provisional government decreed the restitution of those religious properties not yet sold to private buyers to the religious congregations that had escaped suppression under the Cisalpine Republic.¹⁰¹ Moreover, the provisional government re-instituted some monastic communities suppressed during the Cisalpine Republic.¹⁰² The tertiaries from Medicina thus wrote their petitions at a time that was potentially favourable for such supplications. Indeed, their insistence on the “religious banner” of the provisional government in the conclusion of the first petition implies that the women themselves considered this time favourable. The petitions by the tertiaries of S. Antonio in Bergamo, discussed above, were also put forward during this interim period, highlighting again the great awareness among the women religious of the political situation that surrounded them.

The tertiaries of S. Teresa in Medicina who did not sign the two petitions discussed above also interacted with authorities on individual basis. In June 1801, the representative of the National Estate in Bologna, who oversaw matters involving suppressed ecclesiastical properties, contacted the local Cisalpine commissioner about a petition by a tertiary of S. Teresa in Medicina. According to the representative, a ‘citizen’ Gioanna Simoni claimed that during the suppression of S. Teresa she had forfeited her rights to a pension, ‘except for the right to receive a payment of her dowry in the sum of £1500’.¹⁰³ Simoni had yet to receive such payment. The representative indicated that his records did not include a Gioanna Simoni as a pension-receiver from S. Teresa nor mention any agreement with her; however, the representative continued, such notices were included in the documents of the local commissioner in the first place. The representative concluded,

I believe it to be useful in every way and advantageous to the nation to agree to the payment of the dowry rather than to take on the burden of paying a pension [...] because of the young age of the supplicant the capital sum of the dowry would soon be paid out [in pensions]...¹⁰⁴

After hearing that the supplicant Simoni was not included among the pension-receivers from S. Teresa, the local commissioner agreed with the representative and authorized the payment of Simoni's dowry. Simoni had to renounce her rights to a state-provided pension at the receipt of the dowry payment.¹⁰⁵ Simoni's dowry was paid by her brothers and her petition to the authorities was penned to force her brothers into payment. This petition underscores that the secularized religious women did not have to negotiate only with the authorities but also with their own families to secure their livelihood post-suppressions, and that they knew how to do so.

The role of the families of the secularized religious is highlighted by the case of two other tertiaries from the convent in Medicina. Maria and Francesca Errani professed in S. Teresa in April 1797; their brother Sebastiano agreed to pay their dowry over the next two years, by April 1799. S. Teresa was however suppressed before Sebastiano Errani had paid his sisters' dowries in full. After the suppression, Maria and Francesca Errani returned to their paternal home in Ravenna. In 1802, the sisters petitioned the representative of National Estate in Bologna because they had not received any pension payments since the suppression of S. Teresa in 1798.¹⁰⁶ The representative declared that he did not have the right to include anyone to the pension list.¹⁰⁷ The prefect of Bologna compared the Errani case to that of Gioanna Simoni, since both involved women whose dowries to S. Teresa had not been paid in full at the time of suppression; the prefect argued that the Errani, like Simoni, would benefit from a dowry payment rather than from pensions.¹⁰⁸

The matter did not end here, however. By 1804, Sebastiano Errani had paid the outstanding part of the dowry and demanded that his sisters be added to the pension list, 'so that I could finally relieve myself of the maintenance of my sisters, who I have had to maintain until now without any subsidies, thus prejudicing my [own] numerous family'.¹⁰⁹ The same year the Errani case also reached the central authorities in Milan, where an official

in the ministry of finance questioned the legitimacy of the sisters' 1797 profession, '[...]' when exactly did the Errani sisters profess their religious vows, was the province of Bologna already occupied by the French troops, which laws governed or were introduced by the new government about monastic vows [...]'.¹¹⁰ The Errani sisters' post-suppression livelihood thus became a subject of a tug-of-war between the state and their paternal family. *Suor* Maria Maddalena dalla Torri, the mistress of novices in 1797, testified that the Errani sisters had professed on 6 April 1797, when professions were allowed both in Bologna and in Medicina.¹¹¹ The official in Milan found the affirmation of *suor* dalla Torri suspect because the woman remembered the exact date of the profession after so many years.¹¹² The officials in Bologna, however, produced a copy of the profession act dated from 26 April 1797 and confirmed that no law forbade professions in the province of Bologna at that time.¹¹³ The central authorities still doubted that the Errani sisters could have been excluded from the pension list without a reason, to which the Bolognese officials produced further confirmations about the validity of the Erranis' profession and the fact that another woman who professed together with the two sisters was included in the pension list.¹¹⁴ For his part, Sebastiano Errani waged an intense petition campaign through 1804-1805; he sent acquaintances to enquire about the affair in the ministry in Milan as well as in Bologna, copied out and included excerpts of laws in his letters to officials.¹¹⁵ The two sisters may seem relatively passive, compared to their brother. However, I have been able to find only one petition signed by the two sisters. In 1805, the sisters confirm to officials in Bologna that they professed on 6 April 1797 and stress that they had petitioned various officials over a period of four years in order to secure the pensions that they considered rightfully due to them.¹¹⁶ These petitions by the sisters do not survive, in contrast to the many penned by their brother Sebastiano. The scope of the sisters' efforts to negotiate with local but perhaps also

with central authorities thus remains unknown. The Errani affair came to an end in July 1806, when the sisters were included on pension lists.¹¹⁷

IV

This article suggests that women religious actively negotiated the suppression of their monastic communities in early nineteenth century Italy. To better understand the active role the women assumed, the three suppression acts of 1798, 1805, and 1810 must be considered separately.¹¹⁸ Only then does the constantly shifting framework in which the women religious found themselves in the early nineteenth century emerge. The women and their institutions did not encounter a homogeneous suppressing authority; rather, monastic suppressions involved a complex nexus of people from local and central authorities to the women religious and their families. The women religious and their monastic communities expertly negotiated the changing circumstances around them, both before and after the dissolution of their communities. They petitioned with the authorities to keep their religious houses functioning and, when that had failed, to provide for their extra-communal futures. Nevertheless, as Carmen Mangion stresses when discussing the English nuns in revolutionary France, compromise and negotiation cannot be taken for victory over the authorities; the monastic communities were still subjected to suppression in the end.¹¹⁹ This subjection was not, however, a defeat. Rather, when discussing the suppressions and their impact on the women religious, we must consider how the women navigated their suppression experience both *pre* and *post facto*. Only then can we move away from assessments that, explicitly or implicitly, consider the women religious as victims and begin to see expressions of female agency in the process of compromise and negotiation that characterized monastic suppressions in Italy, as well as elsewhere. In this approach, agency is not limited to resistance to or subversion of hegemonic norms but also includes actions within those norms. This builds on the work of the anthropologist Saba Mahmood, who suggests that, ‘we think

of agency not as a synonym for resistance to relations of domination but as a capacity for action that historically specific relations of subordination enable and create'.¹²⁰ The negotiations and compromise with which the women religious lived their suppression experiences underscore the active participation of women in the suppression process and forces a move away from interpretations that consider the women religious as mere subjects of revolutionary religious policies that saw dissolution of monastic communities across Catholic Europe.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the Graduate School, the History department, and the Renaissance and Early Modern Studies Program at Brown University as well as the Edna V. Moffett and the Eugene L. Cox fellowships at Wellesley College for funding my doctoral studies, as well as the research for this article. For their comments on earlier versions of this article, I thank delegates to the HWRBI Annual Conference 2014 in Glasgow, Caroline Castiglione, Carmen M. Mangion, Johanna Mitterhofer, and the anonymous referees of this journal.

Notes

¹ The term *suora* (nun or sister in Italian) was the generic term used to refer to a professed woman religious in early modern Italy. In this article, I use 'woman religious' for any woman who had professed religious vows, 'tertiary' for any woman who had professed simple vows in a third order community, and 'nun' for any woman who had professed solemn vows in a second order community. With regards to monastic orders, 'first order', 'second order' and 'third order' are not hierarchical signifiers but rather refer to the various types of vows and ways of life possible for members of Christian religious orders. 'First orders' refers to male clergy, both priests and monks. 'Second order' refers to nuns who followed a specific rule, professed solemn vows, and lived communally. Enclosure – meaning physical separation from the world as well as restrictions on receiving lay guests – was enforced universally for nuns first by the bull *Periculoso* in 1298 and then reinforced by the Council of Trent (1545-1563). 'Third orders' emerged in the Middle Ages and consisted of the lay members of religious orders who did not necessarily wear a habit or live in a community but often took simple, non-binding vows. Some third orders developed into regular communities, but many tertiaries continued to live in the world. The Tridentine decrees as well as the bulls *Circa pastoralis* (1566) and *Deo sacris virginibus* (1572) suppressed female third orders *de facto* by not allowing new professions in un-enclosed communities. However, as socially active and useful communities, female third orders survived with the tacit approval of local and later also central ecclesiastical authorities. See Herbert Grundmann (1995) *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages: The Historical Links between Heresy, the Mendicant Orders, and the Women's Religious Movement in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Century, with the Historical*

Foundations of German Mysticism, Steven Rowan (trans.) (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press); Ernest W. McDonnell (1969) *The Beguines and Beghards in Medieval Culture, With Special Emphasis on the Belgian Scene* (New York: Octagon Books); Francesca Medioli (1997) Monache e monacazioni nel Seicento, *Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa*, 33, pp. 670–93; Jane Tibbets Schulenberg (1984) Strict Active Enclosure and Its Effects on Female Monastic Experience (500–1100), in *Distant Echoes: Medieval Religious Women*, John A. Nichols and Lillian Thomas Shank (eds.) (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications).

² Archivio di Stato di Milano [ASM], Archivio generale del Fondo di Religione [AGFR], 2991, Libro dell'accettare, vestire, profess.re & morte delle R.de terziarie di San.to Giuseppe di Berg.mo, p. 64r.

³ Don G. Battista Locatelli Zuccala (1938) *Memorie storiche di Bergamo, dal 1796 alla fine del 1813* (Bergamo: Istituto Italiano d'Arti Grafiche).

⁴ Stuart Woolf (1991 [1979]) *A History of Italy 1700-1860: The Social Constraints of Political Change* (London: Routledge), p. 188. On Napoleonic Italy, see also Antonio De Francesco (2011) *L'Italia di Bonaparte: Politica, statualità e nazione nella penisola tra due rivoluzioni, 1796-1821* (Turin: UTET); Alain Pillepich (2005) *Napoleone e gli italiani* (Bologna: Il Mulino).

⁵ Woolf, *A History of Italy 1700-1860*, pp. 170, 175–176, 196–199.

⁶ Michael Broers (2002) *The Politics of Religion in Napoleonic Italy: The War against God, 1801-1814* (London: Routledge).

⁷ Filiberto Agostini (1990) *La riforma napoleonica della chiesa nella Repubblica e nel Regno d'Italia, 1802-1814* (Vicenza: Istituto per le ricerche di storia sociale e religiosa); Marina Caffiero (2011) Chiesa e vita religiosa, in *Italia Napoleonica: Dizionario critico*, Luigi Mascilli Migliorini (Ed.) (Turin: UTET); Claudio Donati and Helmut Flachenecker (Eds.) (2005) *Le secolarizzazioni nel Sacro Romano Impero e negli antichi Stati italiani: premesse, confronti, conseguenze. - Säkularisationsprozesse im Alten Reich und in Italien: Voraussetzungen, Vergleiche, Folgen.* (Bologna and Berlin: il Mulino and Duncker&Humblot); Osanna Fantozzi Micali and Piero Roselli (1980) *Le soppressioni dei conventi a Firenze: Riuso e trasformazione dal sec. XVIII in poi* (Florence: Libreria Editrice Fiorentina); Francesco G. B. Trolese (Ed.) (1992) *Il monachesimo italiano dalle riforme illuministiche all'unità nazionale (1768-1870). Atti del II Convegno di studi storici sull'Italia benedettina.* (Cesena: Badia di Santa Maria del Monte).

⁸ Derek Beales (2003) *Prosperity and Plunder: European Catholic Monasteries in the Age of Revolution, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

⁹ Mita Choudhury (2004) *Convents and Nuns in Eighteenth-Century French Politics and Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press).

¹⁰ Giorgio Penco (1990) Aspetti e caratteri del monachesimo nel Settecento italiano, in *Settecento monastico italiano*, Giustino Farnedi and Giovanni Spinelli (Eds.) (Cesena: Badia di Santa Maria del Monte), p. 27.

¹¹ Gemma Betros (2009) Liberty, Citizenship and the Suppression of Female Religious Communities in France, 1789-90, *Women's History Review* 18, pp. 311–36. More generally on women's petitioning during the French Revolution see Christine Fauré (2006) *Doléances, déclarations et pétitions, trois formes de la parole publique des femmes sous la Révolution*, *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, 344, pp. 5–25.

¹² Carmen M. Mangion (2013) Avoiding 'Rash and Imprudent Measures': English Nuns in Revolutionary Paris, 1789-1801, in *Communities, Culture and Identity: The English Convents in Exile, 1600-1800*, Caroline Bowden and James E. Kelly (Eds.) (Aldershot: Ashgate).

¹³ Many women religious supported refractory clergy, refused constitutional priests in their convents and harboured non-jurors. Choudhury, *Convents and Nuns*, chapter 6; Olwen Hufton (1992) *Women and the Limits of Citizenship in the French Revolution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), pp. 71–77.

¹⁴ Ute Ströbele (2005) *Zwischen Kloster und Welt: die Aufhebung südwestdeutscher Frauenklöster unter Kaiser Joseph II* (Köln und Wien: Böhlau Verlag). For nuns reactions to Josephine suppressions in southwest Germany and in Vienna, see also Janine Maegraith and Christine Schneider in Veronika Čapska et al. (Eds.) (2012) *Between Revival and Uncertainty: Monastic and Secular Female Communities in Central Europe in the Long Eighteenth Century/ Zwischen Aufbruch und Ungewissheit: Klösterliche und weltliche Frauengemeinschaften in Zentraleuropa im "langen" 18. Jahrhundert* (Oprava, Czech Republic: European Social Fund/ Silesian University).

¹⁵ The only book-length study I am aware of is Ströbele, *Zwischen Kloster und Welt*.

¹⁶ Laurence Lux-Sterritt (2005) *Redefining Female Religious Life: French Ursulines and English Ladies in Seventeenth-Century Catholicism* (Aldershot: Ashgate); Elizabeth Rapley (1990) *The Devotes: Women and Church in Seventeenth-Century France* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press).

¹⁷ Marina Caffiero (1994) Dall'esplosione mistica tardo-barocca all'apostolato sociale (1650-1850), in *Donne e fede: Santità e vita religiosa in Italia*, Lucetta Scaraffia and Gabriella Zarri (Eds.) (Roma and Bari: Laterza), pp. 351–355; Gabriella Zarri (2000) *Recinti: Donne, clausura e matrimonio nella prima età moderna* (Bologna: Il Mulino), p. 194.

¹⁸ Veronika Čapska calls attention to the need to study suppressions comparatively across the *longue durée* to understand the changing motives and context of monastic suppressions. Veronika Čapska (2012) Introduction, in *Between Revival and Uncertainty*, Čapska, et al. (Eds.), pp. 31–32.

¹⁹ Mario Fanti (1997) La crisi delle confraternite e delle istituzioni assistenziali a Bologna alla fine del Settecento, in *La rivoluzione nello Stato della Chiesa, 1789-1799*, Luigi Fiorani (Ed.), (Pisa and Rome: Istituti editoriali e poligrafici internazionali), p. 362; Giovanni Spinelli (1992) L'estinzione rivoluzionaria dei monasteri Cassinesi nella Lombardia veneta, in *Il monachesimo italiano dalle riforme illuministiche*, Trolese (Ed.), p. 45.

²⁰ The central decree dated to 8 May 1798. Suppressions in Bologna were decreed on 12 June 1798, those in Bergamo on 15 June 1798. See ASM, Amministrazione del Fondo di Religione [AFR], 216. The Bergamo decree is in ASM, AFR, 2564, 27 Pratile VI.

²¹ ASM, AdG, Culto, Parte antica [PA], 2, fascicolo [fasc.] 8.

²² The debate revolved around the questions of equal division of riches, wealth redistribution, and provision of basic necessities to every citizen. Vittorio Criscuolo (2003) *Ideali e progetti di riforma sociale nell'Italia giacobina e napoleonica*, in *Universalismo e nazionalità nell'esperienza del giacobinismo italiano*, Luigi Lotti and Rosario Villari (Eds.) (Roma and Bari: Laterza).

²³ ASM, AdG, Culto, PA, 1562, 20 Frimale VI, Carnevali to the Great Council.

²⁴ ASM, AdG, Culto, PA, 1562, 12 Fiorile VI, Orsi to the Great Council.

²⁵ ASM, AdG, Culto, PA, 2, fasc. 8.

²⁶ ASM, AdG, Culto, PA, 2, fasc. 8, 3 Fiorile VI, Bossi to the Great Council; ASM, AFR, 2564, 27 Pratile VI, §10-14.

²⁷ ASM, AFR, 2564, 27 Pratile VI, §5.

²⁸ A 1798 report on female monastic communities in Bologna includes population and financial figures about ten third order communities and twenty-eight enclosed communities. The reported estates of third order communities were considerably smaller than those of enclosed communities: the mean value of a third-order estate was 2,886 lire compared to the mean value of a enclosed convent at 24,833 lire. ASM, AFR, 2287, 4 Pratile VI, 'Dipartimento del Reno; Monache Claustrali e Terziarie'.

²⁹ ASM, AFR, 216, 8 June 1805, Art. 6, §33-35.

³⁰ ASM, AFR, 216, 8 June 1805, Art. 4.

³¹ ASM, AFR, 216, 8 June 1805, Art. 5, §19-24.

³² ASM, AFR, 216, 8 June 1805, Art. 5, §25.

³³ ASM, AFR, 216, 8 June 1805, Art. 6, §26-27.

³⁴ Gemma Betros (2008) *Napoleon and the Revival of Female Religious Communities in Paris, 1800-14*, in *Revival and Resurgence in Christian History: Papers Read at the 2006 Summer Meeting and the 2007 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, Kate Cooper and Jeremy Gregory (eds.) (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK and Rochester, NY: Published for the Ecclesiastical History Society by the Boydell Press); Caroline C. Ford (2005) *Divided Houses: Religion and Gender in Modern France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), pp. 33-35.

³⁵ ASM, AFR, 216, 8 June 1805, Art. 5, §21 and Art. 6, §32.

³⁶ ASM, AdG, Culto, PM, 2543, Consiglio di Stato, 5 June 1805.

³⁷ Pillepich, *Napoleone*, pp. 115–119; Woolf, *A History of Italy 1700-1860*, pp. 203–204.

³⁸ Agostini, *La riforma napoleonica*, pp. 8, 28, 96–102.

³⁹ ASM, AdG, Culto, PM, 2541, nr. 7621.

⁴⁰ ASM, AFR, 216, 25 April 1810, §1.

⁴¹ ASM, AdG, Culto, PM, 2542, 25 June 1811.

⁴² ASM, AdG, Culto, PM, 2542, *undated* from 1811.

⁴³ ASM, AFR, 2281, S. Giuseppe, 4 Messidoro VI.

⁴⁴ Penelope D. Johnson (1991) *Equal in Monastic Profession: Religious Women in Medieval France* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press); Amy Leonard (2005) *Nails in the Wall: Catholic Nuns in Reformation Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), chapter 1; Sharon T. Strocchia (2009) *Nuns and Nunneries in Renaissance Florence* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press).

⁴⁵ Interest-bearing credits and loans, both government bonds and private contracts, were central to convent economies in Renaissance and early modern Italy, but also in Spain and its colonies. Kathryn Burns (1999) *Convents and the Spiritual Economy of Cuzco, Peru* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), chapter 5; Elizabeth A. Leffeldt (2005) *Religious Women in Golden Age Spain: The Permeable Cloister* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate); Strocchia, *Nuns and Nunneries*, pp. 81–84; Elissa B. Weaver (2002) *Convent Theatre in Early Modern Italy: Spiritual Fun and Learning for Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 26–29.

⁴⁶ ASM, AFR, 2287; ASM, AGFR, 2973-2976.

⁴⁷ ASM, AGFR, 2991, Libro ove si descrivono li nomi delle officiali del collegio di Santo Gioseppe.

⁴⁸ Archivio di Stato di Bologna [ASB], Fondo Demaniale [Dem.], 15/6292.

⁴⁹ ASM, AGFR, 2981, Registro delle obbligazioni delle Messe e loro Adempimento, p. 1.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 2.

⁵¹ ASM, AFR, 2281, S. Giuseppe; ASM, AGFR, 2980, Case ed affitti diversi dal 1630 al 1805.

⁵² Archivio Arcivescovile di Bologna [AAB], Miscellanea Vecchia [MV], 246, Licenze agli operai, ministri, ed altri addetti ai monasteri di potervi avere accesso, 9 December 1799.

⁵³ ASM, AFR, 2287, S. Maria delle Grazie.

⁵⁴ ASB, Dem., 13/6290, Giornale d'uscita, 1793-1807.

⁵⁵ ASM, AdG, Culto, PA, 1832, S. Antonio di Padova; ASM, AFR, 2281, S. Giuseppe.

⁵⁶ AAB, Parrocchie soppresse [PS], S. Biagio, 5/32, nr. 4-11.

⁵⁷ ASB, Amministrazione Demaniale dei Beni Nazionali [ADBN], 1798, 144, nr. 525.

⁵⁸ Female congregations were suppressed slower particularly in comparison to male congregations, which were mostly suppressed with the first decree in 1798 and already before that. Giacomo Martina (1997) Gli istituti religiosi nello Stato Pontificio negli anni 1789-1799, in *La rivoluzione nello Stato della Chiesa*, Fiorani (Ed.), p. 459.

⁵⁹ Brian A'Hearn (2003) Anthropometric Evidence on Living Standards in Northern Italy, 1730-1860, *The Journal of Economic History*, 63, pp. 351-81; Gian Lodovico Masetti Zannini (1992) Soppressioni e sopravvivenza di benedettine in Romagna, in *Il monachesimo italiano dalle riforme illuministiche*, Trolese (Ed.); Pillepich, *Napoleone*, pp. 38-40.

⁶⁰ ASM, AFR, 2287, S. Elisabetta.

⁶¹ Ute Ströbele also briefly refers to a third-order convent that asked to be suppressed in south-western Germany in the early 1790s. The community in question had grown too small to continue. Ströbele, *Zwischen Kloster und Welt*, p. 71.

⁶² AAB, MV, 265, S. Elisabetta, nr. 38. This is an undated letter draft. An archivist has identified the letter as 'Dopo l'anno 1800. Ritiro di S. Elisabetta in Città per le fanciulle pericolanti e per la correzione delle maritate'.

⁶³ Archivio di Stato di Bergamo [ASBg], Dipartimento del Serio [Dip. Serio], 816, fasc. 6, nr. 4734.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ute Ströbele's work reveals local officials in south-western Germany as strong supporters for the preservation of third order communities in 1782, Ströbele, *Zwischen Kloster und Welt*, chapter 6.

⁶⁶ The relationship between the centre and the periphery in Napoleonic Italy is a central topic in current historiography. See Agostini, *La riforma napoleonica della chiesa*; Broers, *The Politics of Religion*; Michael Broers (2003) The Myth and Reality of Italian Regionalism: A Historical Geography of Napoleonic Italy, 1801-1814, *The American Historical Review*, 108, pp. 688-709; De Francesco, *L'Italia di Bonaparte*.

⁶⁷ ASM, AdG, Culto, PA, 1832, S. Antonio di Padova, 6 December 1799.

⁶⁸ ASM, AGFR, 2945, Pastoral. The Council of Trent instituted enhanced episcopal oversight of women's religious communities. Post-Tridentine pastoral visits and episcopal governance form a veritable sub-field in Italian-language scholarship, for examples see

Umberto Mazzone and Angelo Turchini (1990) *Le visite pastorali: analisi di una fonte* (Bologna: Il Mulino); Paolo Prodi (1959) *Il cardinale Gabriele Paleotti (1522-1597)* (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura); Adriano Prosperi (2011 [1969]) *Tra evangelismo e controriforma: Gian Matteo Giberti (1495-1543)* (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura).

⁶⁹ ASM, AdG, Culto, PA, 1832, S. Giuseppe, Le monache del soppresso convent di S. Antonio di questo Borgo... (1799).

⁷⁰ William J. Bouwsma (1968) *Venice and the Defence of Republican Liberty: Renaissance Values in the Age of the Counter Reformation* (Berkeley: University of California Press), chapter 7.

⁷¹ ASM, AGFR, 2942, Suppliche, rescritti, e ducali..., pp. 29r-v, 37r, 41r; ASM, AGFR, 2945, Monache, e converse, vestizioni al 1795; ASM, AGFR, 2970, Privilegi, immunità, statuti; ASM, AGFR, 2971, Circondario.

⁷² ASM, AdG, Culto, PM, 2557, S. Giuseppe.

⁷³ ASM, AGFR, 2970, Fondazione.

⁷⁴ ASM, AdG, Culto, PM, 2557, S. Giuseppe.

⁷⁵ ASBg, Dip. Serio, 819, fasc. 5., nr. 7139.

⁷⁶ ASM, AFR, 219, nr. 9724.796; ASB, ADBN, 1800-1801, 207, nr. 1257.

⁷⁷ ASB, ADBN, 1800-1801, 204, nr. 59.

⁷⁸ ASB, ADBN, 1800-1801, 207, nr. 1257 (emphasis mine).

⁷⁹ ASB, ADBN, 1798, 146, nr. 685.

⁸⁰ ASM, AFR, 2287, S. Elisabetta and S. Maria della Carità.

⁸¹ ASB, ADBN, 1805, 288, nr. 537.

⁸² For example, ASB, ADBN, 1798, 137, nr. 60 (26 Piovoso VI); ASB, ADBN, 1801-1802, 227, nr. 840 (30 May 1802); ASB, ADBN, 1806, 310, nr. 325 (4 April 1806); ASBg, Disp. Serio, 811, fasc. 2, nr. 5477 (24 Termidoro VIII); *ibid.*, nr. 2525 (23 August 1802).

⁸³ ASBg, Dip. Serio, 819, fasc. 5.

⁸⁴ AAB, MV, 283, Santa Maria de' Pazzi, 1804-1805, unnumbered and undated.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 9 January 1804.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 8 June 1805.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 23 April 1805.

⁸⁸ ASM, AdG, Culto, PA, 1832, S. Antonio di Padova, unnumbered letters.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Betros includes examples of communities writing letters to revolutionary authorities in the name of individual women religious in France, Betros, Liberty, Citizenship and the Suppression of Female Religious Communities, pp. 322–323.

⁹¹ ASM, AdG, Culto, PA, 1832, S. Antonio di Padova, unnumbered letters.

⁹² Emanuele Caprara and Paolo Monti (1983) *La chiesa del Carmine di Medicina: committenza, iconologia, artisti e maestranze nei secoli XVII-XVIII* (Bologna: Alfa), p. 54.

⁹³ ASM, AdG, Culto, PA, 21, fasc. 3., nr. 16506.

⁹⁴ ASB, ADBN, 1798, 144, nr. 525.

⁹⁵ ASB, ADBN, 1802-1803, 251, nr. 675; ASB, ADBN, 1804, 272, nr. 781.

⁹⁶ *Status animarum* (*stati delle anime* in Italian) were parochial registers instituted by the Council of Trent that recorded personal and religious information about all parishioners, child or adult. The registers were completed by parish priests with relative regularity until the earliest nineteenth century.

⁹⁷ AAB, PS, S. Maria delle Muratelle, 47/24, nr. 13-20.

⁹⁸ ASB, ADBN, 1799-1800, 190, nr. 504.

⁹⁹ ASB, ADBN, 1799-1800, 189, nr. 585.

¹⁰⁰ Betros discusses religious communities presenting an image of united communities to the authorities in early revolutionary France, at times using intimidation tactics to achieve this. Betros, Liberty, Citizenship and the Suppression of Female Religious Communities, pp. 314–322.

¹⁰¹ ASM, AFR, 216, fasc. 17.

¹⁰² ASM, AFR, 219, nr. 355, §4; See also De Francesco, *L'Italia di Bonaparte*, pp. 38–39.

¹⁰³ ASB, ADBN, 1800-1801, 206, nr. 878.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ ASB, ADBN, 1801-1802, 227, nr. 804.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ ASB, ADBN, 1804, 270, nr. 171.

¹¹⁰ ASB, ADBN, 1804, 272, nr. 747.

¹¹¹ ASB, ADBN, 1804, 272, nr. 747.

¹¹² ASB, ADBN, 1805, 289, nr. 284.

¹¹³ ASB, ADBN, 1805, 289, nr. 230.

¹¹⁴ ASB, ADBN, 1805, 290, nr. 667.

¹¹⁵ ASB, ADBN, 1804, 272, nr. 520; ASB, ADBN, 1805, 289, nr. 230.

¹¹⁶ ASB, ADBN, 1805, 290, nr. 667.

¹¹⁷ ASB, ADBN, 1806, 309, nr. 1641.

¹¹⁸ Some Italian scholars have also pointed out the need to differentiate clearly between the three suppressions. Carlo Fantappiè (1992) *Soppressione e ripristino dei monasteri benedettini in Toscana fra Sette e Ottocento*, in *Il monachesimo italiano dalle riforme illuministiche*, Trolese (Ed.); Spinelli, *L'estinzione rivoluzionaria dei monasteri Cassinesi nella Lombardia veneta*.

¹¹⁹ Mangion, *Avoiding 'Rash and Imprudent Measures'*, p. 263.

¹²⁰ Saba Mahmood (2006) *Agency, Performativity, and the Feminist Subject*, in *Bodily Citations: Religion and Judith Butler*, Ellen T. Armour and Susan M. St. Ville (Eds.) (New York: Columbia University Press), p. 180. See also Saba Mahmood (2005) *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).